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ABSTRACT

Elementary school students were exposed to a short series of presentations and discussions on drugs in order to effect changes in their attitudes towards, and knowledge of, drugs. Each student expressed his own attitudes towards "grass", the opinions he perceived would be held by famous people, doctors, friends, parents, older siblings or, and his ideas regarding its obtainability. Marihuana usage was found to be rejected considerably more after the course than before it, and the low pre-test correlations found between their attitudes and those they perceived doctors would have changed to a high correlation in the post-test situation. The high negative correlation with famous people's attitudes as perceived by them in the post-test also indicated a reversal of the pre-test situation. It was concluded that significant changes can be effected in student attitudes through the use of open discussion, resource persons and mod films. Teachers and juvenile officers were chiefly responsible for the presentations. (KS)

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ED 062 640

Study of Attitude Change Concerning Marijuana in the Fourth Grade

Betty Galvin and John Starkey

The purpose of this investigation was to examine the quality and quantity of drug education held by a heterogeneous fourth grade class in a Chicago suburban elementary school. Specifically, the study purposed the determination of: (a) what level of drug education had the students obtained outside the classroom; and (b) what level of drug education would be obtained by the students as a result of a short series of presentations and discussions.

Rationale for the Study

This study proceeded from the observation that there was no applicable purchaseable material available immediately. The problem, however, was evident with several local indictments for drug peddling by teen-agers during 1969-70. The local juvenile officer considered the freshman high school year as probably the most vulnerable for trying the drug; peddlers could be expected to try to expand operations by moving the age range of their customers downward.

Study Design

An attitude pre-test was designed to measure reaction to 35 statements concerning opinions about "grass" for: (a) the student answering; (b) famous people; (c) friends; (d) parents; (e) doctors; (f) older siblings or friends; and (g) obtainability. Each of those seven categories had five possibilities: (a) neutrality; (b) disagreement; (c) strong disagreement; (d) agreement; and (e) strong agreement as shown by Table I.

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TABLE I

1.	Grass is o.k., if you like it.	A N
2.	Lots of famous people like grass.	B SA
3.	My friends think everyone should be careful about grass.	C D
4.	My parents think everyone should try grass.	D A
5.	Doctors say no one should ever smoke grass.	E SD
6.	My older brother (or sister) thinks smoking grass is great.	F SA
7.	It costs a fortune to use grass.	G SD
8.	My parents don't care whether anyone uses grass or not.	D N
9.	Doctors say smoking grass is an excellent way to relax.	E SA
10.	My older brother (or sister) thinks grass smokers are a little nuts.	F D
11.	Grass is easy to get.	G A
12.	No one should ever fool around with grass.	A SD
13.	Famous people say even a little grass is harmful.	B SD
14.	My friends think grass smokers are terrible.	C SD
15.	My older brother (or sister) thinks anyone should smoke grass if they want to.	F N
16.	Doctors say it doesn't matter whether you smoke grass or not.	E N
17.	My parents hate grass smoking.	D SD
18.	My friends say lots of people have fun smoking grass.	C SA
19.	Famous people don't seem to be worried about grass smokers.	B N
20.	Grass smoking can help everyone be better.	A SA
21.	It's hard to get grass.	G D
22.	Anyone can get grass if they want it.	G SA
23.	My older brother (or sister) thinks a little grass can't hurt anyone.	F A
24.	Doctors say even a little grass is harmful.	E D
25.	My parents say everyone should have a little fun with grass sometimes.	D SA
26.	My friends don't care anything about the grass situation.	C N
27.	Famous people say some grass is good.	B A
28.	Some people can get hurt smoking grass.	A D
29.	My friends think grass smoking might be fun.	C A
30.	Famous people think we should stay off grass.	B D
31.	Grass may be fun.	A A
32.	Anyone who wants grass can get it.	G N
33.	My older brother (or sister) thinks grass smoking is terrible.	E SD
34.	Doctors say grass smoking can be helpful.	E A
35.	My parents think grass is bad.	D D

The letters indicate degree of agreement and people concerned. A Student answering, B Famous People, C My friends, D My parents, E Doctors, F Older brother or sister or friend, G Obtainability; and SA = strongly agree, A = agree, N = neutral, D = disagree, and SD = strongly disagree.

75% of statements representing student attitudes indicated rejection of marijuana usage in the post-test, compared to 50% in the pre-test.

Highest positive correlations in the post-test were between student attitudes and student's perceptions of doctor's attitudes. This appeared to be a reversal of pre-test answers, where these two attitudes showed the highest negative correlation.

Highest negative correlation in the post-test was with student attitudes and student perception of famous people's attitudes. This also appeared to be a reversal of pre-test answers, where these two attitudes showed the highest positive correlation of yes answers and only three points difference with no answers.

Implications

The data collected in this elementary student attitude study on drug usage indicates that significant changes can be effected in student attitudes through the use of open discussion, resource persons and mod films. The major responsibility for this program was with the classroom teacher. The students' eagerness to discuss the subject with the juvenile officer indicates that much can be done by other personnel. Student interest level in the subject was high, a high degree of openmindedness was evident, and attitude changes were recorded.

The study suggests that it is wise to explore the subject, enlisting student assistance for the exploration of this field which is still new to all concerned.

Analysis of Data

TABLE II

Pre-Test

	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
A Student Answering	3	25	10	18	14	14	25	3	18	10
B Famous People	8	20	12	16	15	12 (1)	18	10	18	9 (1)
C My Friends	8	20	6	22	13	15	16	12	22	6
D My Parents	9	19	5	22 (1)	13	14 (1)	17	11	23	4 (1)
E Doctors	4	24	6	22	4	24	20	6 (2)	15	13
F Older Brother, Sister or Friend	7	21	6	18 (4)	9	18 (1)	22	6	23	5
G Obtainability	16	11 (1)	13	15	15	13	16	12	14	14
Totals	55	140 (1)	58	133 (5)	83	110 (3)	134	60 (2)	133	61 (2)

TABLE III

Post-Test

	SA		A		N		D		SD	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
A Student Answering	0	26 (2)	4	23 (1)	7	20 (1)	23	5	18	10
B Famous People	12	16	3	23 (2)	16	12	20	8	23	5
C My Friends	6	21 (1)	5	23	12	16	23	5	24	4
D My Parents	5	23	3	24 (1)	13	15	25	3	24	3 (1)
E Doctors	4	24	4	24	7	19 (2)	22	4 (2)	21	7
F Older Brother, Sister or Friend	1	25 (2)	14	13 (1)	2	25 (1)	24	3 (1)	21	6 (1)
G Obtainability	15	12 (1)	11	17	15	13	18	10	17	10 (1)
Totals	43	147 (6)	44	147 (5)	72	120 (4)	155	38 (3)	148	45 (3)

( ) = Not Answered

The attitude post-test consisted of the same set of statements, administered 45 calendar days after the pre-test.

The pre-test was followed immediately by 45 minutes of student-teacher discussion to ascertain what was already known about the subject and at what level the local juvenile officer should begin his discussion. One month later, the juvenile officer gave a short factual presentation about marijuana. Various forms of synthetic marijuana enclosed in plastic proved to be of great interest. Discussion with the officer lasted until dismissal an hour later.

Sixteen days after the discussion with the juvenile officer, the class viewed the film "Huffless, Puffless Dragon", a with-it mod production of the American Cancer Society for its anti-smoking campaign. One day later, a student-teacher review discussion was followed by the post-test.

Procedure

The philosophy of this drug education program was to surface a previously undiscussed, but underground, subject for classroom discussion, analysis and education. External events of drug usage among the young indicated the necessity for beginning such an educational program.

Limitations

Personality traits were not evaluated for any of the participants. Such things as the class, location, school organization and parental backgrounds were not assessed, for purposes of comparison with other elementary groups.

Prospects

Requests for drug abuse education can be expected to mount with reports of increasing abuse and examples of youthful indulgence.

The elementary guidance counselor needs to be prepared for queries regarding either individual students or classes this year.